

# Kyodan

## News Letter

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### KYODAN'S "BIRU KYOKAI" (SKYSCRAPER CHURCH) BOOM

The Decade of the Sixties, with its soaring land prices, is past; nevertheless, continuing rising costs of land in Tokyo and other metropolitan areas have brought about a new church building phenomenon, one that can well be called a Biru Kyokai (biru = building) or Skyscraper Church boom.

The phenomenon is found in churches whose immediate post-war wooden buildings have outlived their usefulness and need to be replaced, and whose locations are in rapidly developing areas, where land prices have skyrocketed. The new trend is for such a church to sell part or all of its land for a large sum and to build a multi-purpose building on the remaining property or in a new location where land costs less. In the past several years, a half dozen of these churches have come into existence, in places like Sapporo, Tokyo, Osaka.

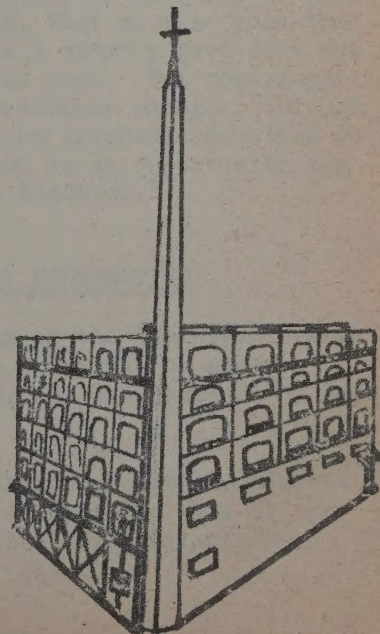
Pastor Kinichi Ishii, 40, of the Matsudo Church of the United Church, radiates confidence and enthusiasm as he describes the SKYSCRAPER CHURCH that will soon be completed in Matsudo.

Matsudo is located in Chiba Prefecture, bordering Tokyo on the northwest. It is a bedtown for Tokyo, with a population of 230,000, much of which is concentrated in the two large housing sub-divisions (danchi) of Tokiwadaira and Koganehara. The population is expected to reach half a million by 1980. The Joban Line of the Japan National Railways passes through Matsudo 30 minutes out of Tokyo's Ueno Station.

Even before the war, residents were made up largely of newcomers from the provinces and from Tokyo. It is said that today residents will most likely know the name of the governor of Tokyo but be unable to recognize the name of Matsudo's mayor and Chiba's governor.

The Matsudo Church recently observed its 60th anniversary. Its pre-war church building badly needed replacing, both because of its worn condition and because the number of people attending worship had increased rapidly in a few years, from 40-50 in the 1950s to more than 100 in the 60s. A new building was dreamed of, various building plans were considered, and finally a completely new building formula was approved.

A six-story building without basement is now under construction, modified from the original seven-story plus basement plan, on a site near Matsudo Station. Funds were secured in cooperation with the Chiba Prefectural Government and the Jutaku Kinyu Koko (a semi-government loan agency) which will advance \$49.7 million of the ¥80 million (\$222,000) required for construction and furnishings for the ferro-concrete





structure. The Sanctuary, the church school rooms and manse will be located on the 5th and 6th floors. The 3rd, 4th and 5th floors will contain 30 small 3-room apartments to be operated by the prefectural government. The 1st and 2nd floors will be rented to various business enterprises. The loan will be repaid over a period of ten years by income from church members' offerings and business rentals.

In contemplating the rapid transformation taking place around Matsudo City and the decision to undertake the erection of a Skyscraper Church, it is well to remember that the present twelve churches (two of which are Kyodan) in Matsudo are already inadequate in terms of being able to minister to the needs of the rapidly growing suburban city. Pastor Ishii feels that several new churches are needed now. Thus, it is the goal of the Matsudo Church to use the income from the rentals of the building to aid new churches in getting started and, when their total debt is repaid, to enlarge their program of mission to include a program directed to meeting social needs in this burgeoning suburb. Thus, Matsudo Church has brought all its resources to bear on the Skyscraper Church as a test case for a whole new direction in mission.

### 阪急 万博中央口駅

With Expo '70 opening in Osaka, the Hankyu Railway, Osaka's largest private railway company, wanted its conductors, drivers, ticket examiners, etc. to learn as much English as possible so as to be able to help visitors from overseas. The company asked Rev. John Walker, a missionary assigned to occupational evangelism, to conduct English classes for them, and he accepted.

Walker and his wife had been noticing the lack of English signs in stations and the absence of English maps. Through the manager of personnel and human relations, who had become a good friend and very open, they began applying pressure on the Hankyu to do something about it. The Japanese newspaper also started to put on pressure. Eventually, the maintenance manager asked Walker to meet with his section, and out of that meeting came the decision to place signs in strategic points in all large stations and to print English maps.

"When we found that the signs cost the company \$138,000 to install, we knew why so much time was spent in thinking it over," he said, "but we also knew that inasmuch as this is the first time EXPO has been held in a country that does not use the Roman alphabet, havoc could reign if nothing were done. But most important has been my contact with the personnel and human relations manager, through our long talks over coffee. They have provided me with an informal education on the hopes and frustrations of Japanese management as well as an opportunity for us to share our faith--I as a Christian and he as a Zen Buddhist."

### STANDING COMMITTEE CONTINUES SEARCH FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY PERSPECTIVE

At the 11th meeting of the Standing Committee, held at the Christian Center Feb. 24-26, a new vice moderator was elected--Shikoku's Kochi Church pastor, Rev. Mitsuho Yoshida. He replaces Dr. Takeshi Takasaki, who had resigned at the previous Standing Committee meeting.

Initially Rev. Kikaku Shimamura of the Fujimicho Church, following several appeals by committee members that he should be willing to serve in view of the nature of the crisis facing the church, was elected on the third ballot, but,

after consulting his Board of Elders, he announced he was unable to accept the position. The next balloting elected the Rev. Yoichiro Saeki of the Tokyo Shinagawa Church, but he too refused to accept the position because of the present demands of his church program.

After a strong appeal by Rev. Toshio Nakamura, Hyogo district moderator, to the effect that one who really loves the Kyodan should accept if elected, Yoshida was elected and, after consulting by phone with his church elders, accepted. Yoshida is a past moderator of Shikoku district and has served as a member of the Kyodan's Standing Committee since 1968. Of his election he said, "I've really been concerned for the Kyodan but until now have been like an outsider looking on. Someone has to do this job, and although I'm a somewhat negative person, and have a different point of view than Moderator Ii, I will accept this responsibility until the General Assembly in October.

Pronouncements by Standing Committee Members. The question of how to interpret the events which transpired at the Nov. 25-26 General Assembly of the Kyodan continued to be an issue as discussion became focussed on pronouncements issued by two different groups of Standing Committee members.

The one to which major attention was devoted was the statement, issued over the signatures of sixteen members of the Standing Committee Jan. 25, and sent by mail to all official delegates to the General Assembly. It stated, in its preamble, that, in view of the inability of the Standing Committee to agree on an evaluation of the Assembly, and in view of the widespread need in the church for interpretation, the committee members felt it incumbent to issue some such statement without waiting for the next Standing Committee meeting, which was not due to be held until near the end of February. The statement was headed: A Concerted View of the Standing Committee Concerning the 16th Extraordinary Kyodan General Assembly and Statement on the Current Situation in the Kyodan.

The statement itself offered a strong criticism of the Assembly proceedings as being a one-sided forum in favor of the anti-Expo faction, in which opinions contrary to their position were not permitted freedom of expression. It pronounced severely upon the responsibility of Moderator Ii in not exercising sufficient control over disruptive elements and not upholding the duly constituted Assembly procedures. It also acknowledged responsibility on the part of Standing Committee members in failing to make sufficient effort to uphold the dignity of the Assembly, and called on the members of the Assembly to ensure that such a travesty of the rules and dignity of the church and of moral principles would never again be committed.

This statement became the subject of a heated three-hour debate at the Feb. 24-26 Standing Committee meeting. A group of young pastors, seminary students and young laymen, having received recognition as non-voting members and observers, criticized the signatory members for circulating a statement having the verisimilitude of an official Standing Committee pronouncement, when the Committee itself had not yet reached a consensus and issued a statement. While claiming to uphold the proper rules of procedure of the Assembly system, they said, these members were violating these very rules by taking this kind of action prior to the official action of the committee they were, in substance, claiming to represent. Another point of criticism was the judgmental character of the statement, made without any attempt to assess the content of the issues on which the General Assembly had been convened, issues which had a strong bearing on the conduct of the Assembly which was under criticism.

The non-voting member group affirmed that such a statement could be made legitimately only as a private one of individual members of the Assembly or "Standing Committee Members" but could not rightly be issued under the aegis of the "Standing Committee."

The non-voting members in attendance demanded that the signatory members of the Standing Committee retract the statement as a condition to proceeding with the evaluation of the General Assembly. However, Yoshida, who had just been elected new vice moderator, while agreeing to delete the word "Committee" from the heading, refused to retract the statement itself, especially since only half of the signatory members were present, and also since he refused to acknowledge the illegitimacy of the members' issuing the kind of statement in question. He did, along with other signatory members present, agree to raise the issue with the entire group and discuss it, presenting the points of contention that had been raised.

#### DISTRICT MODERATORS MEET

Moderators, or their representatives, of the 16 Kyodan Districts met in annual meeting February 23-24, and presented a three-point request to the Kyodan Standing Committee, which met on the two succeeding days.

They asked, first, that Standing Committee members be urged to attend the district moderators' meeting in future; second, that special consideration be given to districts that are hard pressed to meet their responsibilities for the 1970 budget and for the Kyodan Equalization Grants; and third, that the pastors' examinations, which had been postponed by the Committee on Ministerial Training and Qualifications, be held as soon as possible, aiming at June or July. The moderators also urged giving special help and counsel to seminary graduates in making contacts with churches and suggested including them in pastors' meetings and insurance programs, even though their lay status continues until they pass the qualifying examinations and become ordained.

#### RIOT POLICE SUMMONED BY TUTS

Confrontation between the Student Self-governing Body of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and the faculty over various issues became an open rift in early September, when the faculty issued an official statement condemning student and pastor actions on the occasion of the Sept. 1 Kyodan Standing Executive Committee meeting. The gap widened when, on Nov. 24, a faction of 80 students occupied and barricaded the seminary building, thus escalating the current boycott of classes to the point of a standstill for the entire college program.

With all attempts to reach a compromise ending in failure, Pres. Takasaki summoned the riot police and, on the morning of March 11, at 7:00 p.m., stood in front of the college building and, through a portable loudspeaker, ordered the occupying students to evacuate the building within ten minutes or face arrest. Of the eight students who had been sleeping in the building, two had left early, three made their exit past the line of 150 police, and three elected to remain in token protest and were arrested without offering resistance.

In the March 21 issue of the Kyodan Shimpo a statement was published by Pres. Takasaki explaining the background of his action, and a statement made also by the "Barricade Faction of TUTS" strongly protesting the action of resorting to police help. Eighty-one members of this same group have expressed their intention not to register for enrollment in the new college year commencing in April and are boycotting the classes which re-commenced on March 17.

